

Artist-in-Residence at ACM Uses Found Sounds and Objects

By ADAM SWIFT

No two people experience a work of art in quite the same way. For Easthampton artist Kathleen Trestka, how she creates her artwork plays almost as important a role in how viewers experience it as the finished product.

Trestka, the artist-in-residence this month at the Art Complex Museum, uses found objects, flames, ash, crushed semi-precious stones, and perhaps most interestingly, sounds, when creating her vivid, sculpture-like paintings and mixed-media creations.

"There's just so much more to learn about sound and how it affects the human body and psyche," she said.

The sounds Trestka uses in her work range from waves crashing on the beach to music to Tibetan mantras.

How she uses the sounds might seem surprising. Trestka doesn't create multimedia productions with music or found sounds piped into the background; she uses the sounds as materials, much as she or other artists use paints, charcoal, or sculpting clay.

While the paint is still wet on the canvas, Trestka may use Tibetan singing bowls or recite a mantra directly in front of the painting.

"Theoretically, when the paint dries, it will keep the vibrations," she said.

How people experience sound in the artwork is very subjective, Trestka said.

"A lot has to do with perspective," she said. "If someone looks at a piece and finds



Artist Kathleen Trestka uses sound from Tibetan singing bowls in one of her paintings.

that there is a particular vibration embedded in the piece, they can choose to believe or not believe that in how they experience it. So much comes back to belief and how we live in the world."

Trestka was born on Long Island and currently has an art studio in Easthampton. She first learned about the opportunity to take advantage of the month-long artist-in-residence program at the Art Complex Museum when she had a kite in the Flights of Fancy exhibit at the museum.

Currently, Trestka is working on a series of ten drawings that depict the primordial elements of a number of different cultures in a sculptural, three-dimensional way.

"I work with energy until I feel it in my body and mind and I can bring that into my work," she said.

While Trestka had been working on the primordial energy series in Easthampton,

she said she plans on using materials from Duxbury while at the ACM. One of the high points of being in Duxbury, she said, is having the chance to go to the beach every day.

"I grew up on the ocean in Long Island, so it's a real pleasure to be close to the beach again," Trestka said. "I go to the beach every day to gather materials."

Those materials can be natural or manmade, and her studio space both in Duxbury and in Easthampton resembles a laboratory, she said.

"I'm always gathering materials," Trestka said. "There are all the materials I grind and burn so I can do drawings. I think of my studio as a laboratory where alchemy is taking place and my work is the result of the alchemical process that takes place."

Trestka first discovered her need to create art when she was in fourth grade.

"I was on a school trip to the Met in New York City and I was so overwhelmed by everything I saw," she said. "There was one sculpture where I was moved to tears. I was so transported by it, that the bus left me behind and they had to come back to find me."

"From that moment on, I was drawn to make art," Trestka said.

As an artist, Trestka has worked to combine the spirit of east and west, ancient and modern.

"I gather information from different cultures in the world," she said. "A lot of my work has to do with the forces that influence life, large and small. While my work is based on a lot of ancient traditions, it's also very contemporary with how I work with images, materials and processes."

Visits to Trestka's open studio at the ACM are free and are encouraged from 1-4 p.m on Thursdays and Fridays and on request through the end of the month by calling 781-934-6634.